

School Recycling Programs

Maine State Planning Office Waste Management & Recycling Program



Having schools involved in recycling programs can assist the town's overall waste reduction and recycling efforts:

- ✿ Schools generate a large amount of recyclable paper which impacts the municipal waste stream.
- ✿ Recycling programs in the schools can ensure and encourage student, parent and staff participation in the town's overall efforts to reduce and recycle.

SCHOOL RECYCLING PROGRAMS

There are several options for school recycling activities, as follows:

- ✿ conduct waste audits in the classrooms by students;
- ✿ identify and implement waste reduction measures, including replacing disposables in the cafeterias with reusable items;
- ✿ recycle cardboard, glass, plastic and metal in kitchens;
- ✿ collect recyclable paper in classrooms and offices;
- ✿ compost cafeteria wastes with leaves from school grounds;
- ✿ purchase recycled paper with post-consumer content for use in school offices and classrooms; and
- ✿ plant trees to signify the number of trees saved by recycling.

PAPER RECYCLING

One of the simplest and most effective ways to learn about recycling is to have students plan and implement a paper recycling program within the school. It can be relatively easy to implement, involves the entire student body and faculty, reduces the amount of waste being disposed and could potentially reduce the school's costs of disposal. The following steps can be used to set up a paper recycling program:

⦿ FIND OUT WHERE YOUR SUPPORTERS ARE. Who is interested? Who has the necessary time and commitment? Enlist teachers, the student council, an environmental club, a science class or any concerned student. Establish a recycling committee. Get and keep the administration involved in the process.

⦿ GET ORGANIZED. There should be a faculty advisor to provide continuity and communication with the principal and school board. It is also important to have the support of the custodial staff from the very beginning. Assign specific tasks to each member of the committee. Set regular meeting times and develop a structure for ongoing management of the project.

⦿ CONDUCT A WASTE AUDIT. What types of paper does your school generate? Corrugated cardboard? Accompany the custodian on the trash pickup rounds and look at the school's garbage. You may be able to visually estimate the percentage and different types of paper in the waste. If not, take one day's worth of trash and sort through it, separating and weighing each type of waste material. Determine how much is recyclable. Also check the school's purchasing records to see how much paper is bought to help estimate how much might be collected in a recycling program.

☉ **FIND A MARKET.** Now that you have some idea of how much and what types of paper you are generating and collecting, you will need to find someone interested in recycling the material. It is easiest if you combine the recycling program with existing waste management practices.

Does your present trash hauler offer any recycling services? If the school's waste hauler does not recycle, locate a paper broker or see if there is an existing recycling program in your town that will accept your paper.

After you have located someone to help you recycle the paper, discuss handling arrangements. What kinds of paper will they accept? Can they pick up? What is the minimum amount of paper required? If you generate small quantities or have no storage space, what arrangements can be made for delivering your paper to the processor? Can they provide containers? Explore all options, keep it simple and make it convenient for everyone. Remember: dependable service and reliability are important considerations in helping your program succeed.

☉ **DETERMINE YOUR SPACE, CONTAINER AND EQUIPMENT NEEDS.** Work cooperatively with the school's maintenance staff and your recycler to decide where or how materials will be collected and stored. The same style collection bins should be used throughout the school for easy identification. If possible, they should be different than regular trash containers and be clearly marked for the type of material being collected. Storage areas need to be easily accessible to your broker for pickup and comply with fire safety codes.

☉ **GET PEOPLE TO PARTICIPATE.** An aggressive educational and promotional program is necessary. Clear, consistent and ongoing information is the key to a successful program. The educational program must say what you want the students, teachers and administrative staff to do, how to do it and why. To educate students, teachers and administrative staff, develop recycling promotional materials; distribute notices, use bulletin boards and have teachers incorporate recycling education activities in their classes. Launch your recycling plan with a poster contest, an assembly program or some other school event. Make it fun and involve as many as is possible.

To keep participation high after your program is launched, use contests and continued publicity. Give a prize to the classroom that recycles the most paper. Develop a student recycling newsletter. Draw new posters and flyers.

☉ **EVALUATE YOUR PROGRAM.** Good record keeping is essential to help evaluate your program's effectiveness. How much are you recycling? Is this the amount you expected? If not, do you need to increase promotional efforts? Do a follow-up waste audit once a year to measure your effectiveness. Recycling data can also be used to promote the program. Tell the people through your promotional materials how much has been recycled, what the savings are and how much revenue is received. This has been shown to help keep people recycling.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Teach students the benefits of waste reduction and recycling through classroom activities. Invite speakers that are knowledgeable about the subject. Use the 'Pathways to a Sustainable Future' curriculum (developed by the Chewonki Foundation in Wiscasset with help from the State) which has activities and ideas for waste reduction and recycling lessons for grades K through 12.

For more information, please contact:
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